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Michigan Farm Bureau statement on Governor's Executive Order *Organization calls on Legislature to maintain transparency in MDA oversight*

The Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB), the state's largest general farm organization, calls on the Legislature to maintain the transparency, accountability and citizen involvement of the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) and overturn the Governor's Executive Order which eliminates the current authority of the Commission of Agriculture to oversee MDA and select and manage the director of the department.

Under today's Executive Order, the MDA director would gain sole oversight of the department and become an appointee of the Governor. However, the Executive Order does not provide any real cost savings. Instead, all it does is further centralize power within the Executive Office without providing any government efficiency.

MFB policy supports the present bipartisan commission system, including authority for the Agriculture Commission to employ the MDA director. This system has allowed for continuity and consistency of programs affecting Michigan's \$71.3 billion agriculture industry.

Under the Governor's approach, ultimate decisions, including revisions to Generally Accepted Agriculture and Management Practices for Michigan's Right to Farm Act, would be made solely by the director, and the Commission of Agriculture's role would be limited to simply providing a forum for gathering information.

Replacing the open style of the Commission with a closed, behind-doors approach denies the people of Michigan the transparency and accountability they deserve. The move also strips agricultural stakeholders of their ability to be directly involved in the management of the state's diverse and complex agriculture.

Functional oversight of the MDA, its director and decisions on vital programs affecting the state's agriculture industry best belong to a citizen-based commission—not a bureaucracy.

The order also abolishes the Pesticide Advisory Council and the Agriculture Preservation Fund Board. Abolishing the Agriculture Preservation Fund Board will put the sole authority for distribution of grants from PA 116 payback funds into the hands of the MDA director, eliminating the opportunity for critical agricultural stakeholder involvement.

Further, the transfer of the Office of Racing Commissioner from MDA to the Michigan Gaming Control Board will further cripple Michigan's already struggling horse racing industry, as horse racing would likely be a low priority of the Gaming Control Board. It is widely understood that having someone involved in the horse racing industry serve as Racing Commissioner is crucial to the success of this agricultural sector.